

THE
TRUE MEANING
OF THE
SYSTEM OF NATURE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF
HELVETIUS.

K

WITH NOTES.

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**THE
TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.**

IN a season of alarm like the present, when principles, subversive of our existence as a nation, are publicly maintained and industriously promulgated, it becomes the duty of every good man to point out their dangerous tendency to his fellow citizens; especially when the most insidious arts are resorted to for their propagation.

By the energy of our tribunals, and the active zeal of the well affected, displayed of late with a vigour, perhaps, beyond the law, the open attacks of the seditious upon our happy constitution have been completely baffled. But vigilance must not subside with the disappearance of

danger. Tho' apparently put down, our enemies have not yet abandoned their hostile designs. They are still actively employed, and only wait an opportunity for again standing forward, with what additional strength their subtilty and intrigues may have gained to their cause.

The principal mean they now use to carry their flagitious schemes into effect, is the extirpation of our most holy faith; a measure which they industriously prosecute, with all the talents for mischief by which they are so much distinguished. The altar they well know to be the great bulwark of the throne; and the eradication of religion from the minds of their countrymen, they consider as ensuring the success of their attempts upon the constitution. Hence the press teems with publications and the stage with exhibitions, attacking,

directly or indirectly, certain doctrines of established religion. A laxity in morals, and an inattention to the duties of worship, so perceptible in the manners of the present times, authorise an apprehension, that the efforts of anarchy have not altogether been ineffectual.

The means they use to accomplish this object, are not more wicked than artful. With the words universal peace, benevolence, and toleration perpetually in their mouths, they find men who give them credit for those virtues. At first, affecting the most sacred regard for the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, they only pretend to reform, and reconcile to reason, some of its apparently contradictory dogmas. Emboldened by success, they frequently proceed to attack the very fundamental doc-

trines of revelation, by attempting, to use their own phrase, to reconcile them to reason. From thence to deism, or the denial of all revelation, the step is but short. By the influence of such arts, we accordingly see the cause of impiety prevail, even where the religion of Jesus formerly flourished in its highest purity.

It is not my intention to trace the conspiracy against religion through all the different stages of its progress. Assuming by turns a thousand different disguises, it often seems to elude the most scrupulous enquiry. But wherever we find discussions upon religion countenanced, discoveries of pretended inaccuracies in the biblical text, schisms and divisions from the established national church, an extraordinary affectation of sanctity by men whose lives are a satire upon all piety ; there, we may be

assured, the designs of anarchy have already made some progress.

Though our enemies have not yet thought it prudent to make an open avowal of atheism, it is evident that this is the last step of their impious career. That it is their religion, (if that which annihilates all divinity can be so called) is a fact which additional evidence cannot make more clear. The writings of Robinson and Barruel, indeed, have so completely established this point, that good men now entertain but one opinion upon the subject.

To put the people of Great Britain upon their guard against those who wish to strip them of their religion, and plunge them into the horrors of anarchy and impiety, was the motive which induced the Translator to present this treatise to the public. It is

a compend by Helvetius of the "Système de nature," a work published under the name of Mirabaud, though the well-known production of Diderot, assisted by Robinet, and other disciples of the French school of infidelity. It contains almost every thing that can be said in favour of atheism, and affords a complete view of that system which the seditious wish to substitute in place of the holy religion of Jesus. It will, it is trusted, produce the happiest effects upon those who have been drawn into the snares of impiety, though yet unaware of the lengths to which it may lead them, since it must excite in their minds a comparison between the doctrines of atheism and Christianity, from which they will necessarily find innumerable motives to determine them to return to that religion, which alone affords a security for present as well as future felicity,

By exposing also the fallacies of deism, and all other systems unfounded on revelation, it may have the effect of again bringing within the pale of the church many good men who have been perverted from their duty, by those pretensions to peace, virtue, and benevolence, assumed by infidels, as the means of making proselytes to their cause, by operating upon the most amiable feelings of human nature.

Superficial reasoners may object, that this publication will augment the very evil which the Translator wishes to counteract. To him this is no subject of apprehension. It is but paying a bad compliment to the acknowledged good sense of Britons, to suppose the flimsy reasoning, and idle declamation, contained in even the best atheistical work, capable of influencing or perverting their judgment.

The exposal of error is its detection: so thought St. Paul, and the principal fathers of the primitive church, whose authority will not readily be questioned.

The Translator has added to this treatise a few notes, from some of the ablest writers upon atheism, that its friends may have no pretence for saying, that their cause has been unfairly submitted to the public judgment.

Should this work have the effect of bringing back even one proselite of impiety to the holy religion of his country, the grateful acknowledgments of that reclaimed individual, will console the Translator for the obloquy and hatred with which he is sure of being loaded by the friends of anarchy, for the part he has acted in exposing their monstrous system to the public at large in an English translation.

SYSTEM OF NATURE.

INTRODUCTION.

MAN, unfortunately for himself, wishes to exceed the limits of his sphere, and to transport himself beyond the visible world. He neglects experience, and feeds himself with conjectures. Early prepossessed by artful men against reason, he neglects its cultivation. Pretending to know his fate in another world, he is inattentive to his happiness in the present.

The author's object is, to recal man to reason by rendering it dear to him,---to dissipate the clouds which obscure the way to his happiness,---to offer reflections useful to his peace and comfort, and favourable to mental improvement.

So far from wishing to destroy the duties of morality, it is the author's object to give them double force, and establish them on the altar of virtue, which alone merits the homage of mankind.

CHAP. I.

OF NATURE.

MAN is the work of nature, and subject to her laws, from which he cannot free himself, nor even exceed in thought. A being formed by nature, he is nothing beyond the great whole of which he makes a part. Beings supposed to be superior to, or distinguished from nature, are mere chimeras, of which no real idea can be formed.

Man is a being purely physical. The moral man is only the physical man, considered in a certain point of view. His organization is the work of nature; his visible actions and invisible movements are equally the natural effects and consequences of his mechanism. His inventions are the effect of his essence. His ideas proceed from the same cause. Art is only nature, acting by instruments which she has herself made---all is the impulse of nature.

It is to physics and experience that man in all his researches ought to have recourse. Nature acts by simple laws. When we quit experience, imagination leads us astray. 'Tis from want of experience that men have formed wrong ideas of matter. [NOTE A.]

Indolence is gratified in following example, habit, and authority, rather than experience, which demands activity, or reason, which requires reflection. Hence an aversion to every thing that deviates from ordinary rules, and an implicit respect for ancient institutions---Credulity proceeds from inexperience. By consulting experience and contemplating the universe, we will only find in it matter and motion.

CHAP. II.

OF MOTION AND ITS ORIGIN.

IT is motion which alone forms the connections between our organs and external and internal objects.

A cause is a being that puts another in motion, or which produces the change that one body effects upon another by means of motion.

We only know the manner in which a body acts upon us by the change it produces.

It is from actions only that we can judge of interior motions, as thoughts and other sentiments---when we see a man flying, we conclude him to be afraid.

The motion of bodies is a necessary consequence of their essence. Every being has laws of motion peculiar to itself.

Every body in the universe is in motion. Action is essential to matter. All beings but come into existence, encrease, diminish, and ultimately perish: metals, minerals, &c. are all in action. The stones which lie upon the ground act upon it by pressure. Our sense of smell is acted upon by emanations from the most compact bodies.

Motion is inherent in nature, which is the great whole, out of which nothing can exist, and is essential to it. Matter moves by its own energy, and possesses properties, according to which it acts.

In attributing the motion of matter to a cause, we must suppose, that matter itself has come into existence—a thing impossible; for since it cannot be annihilated, how can we imagine it to have had a beginning?

Whence has matter come? It has always existed. What is the original cause of its motion? Matter has always been in motion, as motion is a consequence of its ex-

istence, and existence always supposes properties in the existing body. Since matter possesses properties, its manner of action necessarily flows from its form of existences. Hence a heavy body must fall.

CHAP. III.

OF MATTER AND ITS MOTION.

THE changes, forms, and modifications of matter alone proceed from motion. By motion, every body in nature is formed, changed, enlarged, diminished, and destroyed.

Motion produces a perpetual transmigration, exchange, and circulation of the particles of matter. These particles separate themselves to form new bodies. One body nourishes other bodies; and those afterwards restore to the general mass the elements which they had borrowed from it. Suns are produced by the combinations of matter; and those wonderful bodies, which man in his transitory existence only sees for a moment, will one day, perhaps, be dispersed by motion.

CHAP. IV.

*LAWS OF MOTION COMMON TO ALL BEINGS--
ATTRACTION AND REPULSION--NECESSITY.*

WE consider effects as natural, when we see their acting cause. When we see an extraordinary effect, whose cause is unknown to us, we have recourse to imagination, which creates chimeras.

The visible end of all the motions of bodies, is the preservation of their actual form of existence, attracting what is favourable, and repelling what is prejudicial to it. From the moment of existence we experience motions peculiar to a determined essence.

Every cause produces an effect, and there cannot be an effect without a cause. If every motion, therefore, be ascribable to a cause, and these causes being determined by their nature, essence and properties, we

must conclude, that they are all necessary, and that every being in nature, in its given properties and circumstances, can only act as it does. Necessity is the infallible and constant tie of causes to their effects: and this irresistible power, universal necessity, is only a consequence of the nature of things, in virtue of which the whole acts by immutable laws. [NOTE B.]

CHAP. V.
OF ORDER AND DISORDER--INTELLIGENCE
AND CHANCE.

THE view of the regular motions of nature produces, in the human mind, the idea of order. This word only expresses a thing relative to ourselves. The idea of order or of disorder is no proof that they really exist in nature, since there every thing is necessary. Disorder in relation to a being is nothing but its passage into a new order or form of existence. Thus in our eyes, death is the greatest of all disorders; but death only changes our essence--- We are not less subject afterwards to the laws of motion.

Intelligence is called the power of acting according to an end, which we know the being possesses to whom we ascribe it. We deny its existence in beings whose forms of action are different from ours.

When we do not perceive the connection of certain effects with their causes, we attribute them to chance. When we see, or think we see, what is called Order, we ascribe it to an intelligence, a quality borrowed from ourselves, and from the particular form in which we are affected.

An intelligent being thinks, wills, and acts, to arrive at an end. For this purpose, organs, and an end similar to our own, are necessary---They would above all be necessary to an intelligence supposed to govern nature, as without organs, there can neither be ideas, intuition, thought, will, plan, nor action. Matter, when combined in a certain manner, assumes action, intelligence, and life. [NOTE C.]

CHAP. VI.

OF MAN---HIS PHYSICAL AND MORAL DISTINCTIONS---HIS ORIGIN.

MAN is always subject to necessity--- His temperament is independent of him, yet it influences his passions---His blood, more or less abundant or warm, his nerves more or less relaxed, the aliments upon which he feeds,---all act upon and influence him.

Man is an organised whole, composed of different matters, which act according to their respective properties. The difficulty of discovering the causes of his motions and ideas, produced the division of his essence into two natures. He invented words, because ignorant of things.

Man, like every thing else, is a production of nature. What is his origin? We want experience to answer the question.

Has he always existed, or is he an instantaneous production of nature? Either of the cases is possible. Matter is eternal, but its forms and combinations are transitory. It is probable, that he was produced at a particular period of our globe, upon which he, like its other productions, varies according to the difference of climate. He was doubtless produced male and female, and will exist so long as the globe remains in its present state. When that is changed, the human species must give way to new beings, capable of incorporating themselves with the new qualities which the globe will then possess.

When we are unable to account for the production of man, to talk of God and of creation is but confessing our ignorance of the energy of nature.

Man has no right to believe himself a privileged being in nature. He is subject to the same vicissitudes as its other produc-

tions. The idea of human excellence is merely founded on the partiality which man feels for himself.

CHAP. VII.

OF THE SOUL AND ITS SPIRITUALITY.

WHAT is called the Soul moves with us. Now, motion is a property of matter. The soul also shews itself material in the invincible obstacles which it encounters on the part of the body. If the soul causes me to move my arm when there is no obstacle in the way, it ceases doing so when the arm is pressed down by a heavy weight. Here then is a mass of matter which annihilates an impulse given by a spiritual cause, which, being unconnected with matter, ought to meet with no resistance from it.

Motion supposes extent and solidity in the body that is moved. When we ascribe action to a cause, we must therefore consider that cause to be material.

While I walk forward, I do not leave my soul behind me. Soul therefore possesses

one quality in common with the body and peculiar to matter. The soul makes a part of the body, and experiences all its vicissitudes, in passing through a state of infancy and of debility, in partaking of its pleasures and pains; and with the body exhibiting marks of dulness, debility, and death. In short, it is only the body viewed in relation to some of its functions.

What sort of substance is it which can neither be seen nor felt? An immaterial being, yet acting upon matter! How can the body inclose a fugitive being, which eludes all the senses?

CHAP. VIII.

OF THE INTELLECTUAL FACULTIES—ALL DERIVED FROM SENSATION.

SENSATION is a manner of being affected, peculiar to certain organs of animated bodies, occasioned by the presence of a material object. Sensibility is the result of an arrangement peculiar to animals. The organs reciprocally communicate impressions to one another.

Every sensation is a shock given to the organs ; a perception, that shock communicated to the brain ; an idea, the image of the object which occasioned the sensation and perception. If our organs, therefore, be not moved, we can neither have perceptions nor ideas.

Memory produces imagination. We form a picture of the things we have seen, and, by imagination, transport ourselves to what we do not see.

Passions are movements of the will, determined by the objects which act upon it, according to our actual form of existence.

The intellectual faculties attributed to the soul, are modifications ascribable to the objects which strike the senses. Hence a trembling in the members, when the brain is affected by the movement called fear.

[NOTE D.]

CHAP. IX.

DIVERSITY OF THE INTELLECTUAL FACULTIES—THEY DEPEND, LIKE THE MORAL QUALITIES, ON PHYSICAL CAUSES.—NATURAL PRINCIPLES OF SOCIETY, MORALS, AND POLITICS.

TEMPERAMENT decides the moral qualities. This we have from nature, and from our parents. Its different kinds are determined by the quality of the air we breath, by the climate we inhabit, by education, and the ideas which it inspires.

By making mind spiritual, we administer to it improper remedies. Constitution which can be changed, corrected, and modified, should alone be the object of our attention.

Genius is an effect of physical sensibility. It is the faculty possessed by some human beings, of seizing, at one glance, a whole and its different parts.

By experience, we foresee effects not yet felt---hence prudence and foresight. Reason is nature modified by experience.

The final end of man is self-preservation, and rendering his existence happy. Experience shews him the need he stands in of others to attain that object, and points out the means of rendering them subservient to his views. He sees what is agreeable or disagreeable to them, and these experiences give him the idea of justice, &c. Neither virtue nor vice are founded on conventions, but only rest upon relations subsisting among all human beings.

Men's duties to one another arise from the necessity of employing those means which tend to the end proposed by nature. ---It is by promoting the happiness of other men, that we engage them to promote our own.

Politics should be the art of directing the passions of men to the good of society. Laws ought to have no other object than

the direction of their actions also to the same object.

Happiness is the uniform object of all the passions. These are legitimate and natural, and can neither be called good nor bad, but in so far as they affect other men. To direct the passions to virtue, it is necessary to shew mankind advantages resulting from its practice.

CHAP. X.

*THE MIND DRAWS NO IDEAS FROM ITSELF---
WE HAVE NO INNATE IDEAS.*

IF we can only form ideas of material objects, how can their cause be supposed immaterial?

To this, dreams are opposed as an objection; but in sleep the brain is filled with a crowd of ideas which it received when awake---Memory always produces imagination. The cause of dreams must be physical, as they most frequently proceed from food, humours, and fermentations, unanalogous to the healthy state of man.

The ideas supposed to be innate, are those which are familiar to, and, as it were, incorporated with us: but it is always thro' the medium of the senses that we acquire them. They are the effect of education, example, and habit. Such are the ideas formed of God, which evidently proceed from the descriptions given of him.

Our moral ideas are the fruit of experience alone. The sentiments of paternal and filial affection are the result of reflection and habit.

Man acquires all his notions and ideas. The words beauty, intelligence, order, virtue, grief, pain and pleasure, are, to me, void of meaning, unless I compare them with other objects. Judgment pre-supposes sensibility; and judgment itself is the fruit of comparison.

CHAP. XI.

OF THE SYSTEM OF MAN'S LIBERTY.

MAN is a physical being, subject to nature, and consequently to necessity. Born without our consent, our organization is independent of us, and our ideas come to us involuntarily. Action is the sequel of an impulse communicated by a sensible object.

I am thirsty, and see a well---Can I hinder myself from wishing to drink of it? But I am told, the water is poisoned, and I abstain from drinking. Will it be said, that in this case I am free? Thirst necessarily determined me to drink; the discovery of poison necessarily determines me not to drink. The second motive is stronger than the first, and I abstain from drinking. But an imprudent man, it may be said, will drink. In this case his first impulse will be strongest. In either case, the action is necessary. He who drinks is a madman; but the actions.

of madmen are not less necessary than those of other men.

A debauchee may be persuaded to change his conduct. This circumstance does not prove that he is free; but only, that motives can be found, sufficient to counteract the effect of those which formerly acted upon him.

Choice by no means proves liberty; since hesitation only finishes when the will is determined by sufficient motives; and man cannot hinder motives from acting upon his will. Can he prevent himself from wishing to possess what he thinks desirable? No; but we are told, he can resist the desire, by reflecting upon its consequences. But has he the power of reflecting? Human actions are never free---They necessarily proceed from constitution, and from received ideas, strengthened by example, education, and experience. The motive which determines man is always beyond his power.

Notwithstanding the system of human liberty, men have universally founded their

systems upon necessity alone. If motives were thought incapable of influencing the will, why make use of morality, education, legislation, and even of religion? We establish institutions to influence the will; a clear proof of our conviction, that they must act upon it. These institutions are necessarily demonstrated to man.

The necessity that governs the physical, governs also the moral world, where every thing is also subject to the same law.

CHAP. XII.

*EXAMINATION OF THE OPINIONS WHICH
MAINTAIN THE SYSTEM OF NECESSITY
TO BE DANGEROUS.*

IF men's actions are necessary, by what right, it is asked, are crimes punished, since involuntary actions are never the objects of punishment?

Society is an assemblage of sensible beings, susceptible of reason, who love pleasure, and hate pain. Nothing more is necessary to engage their concurrence to the general welfare. Necessity is calculated to impress all men.---The wicked are madmen, against whom others have a right to defend themselves. Madness is an involuntary and necessary state, yet madmen are confined. But society should never excite desires, and afterwards punish them. Robbers are often those whom society has deprived of the means of subsistence.

By ascribing all to necessity, we are told, the ideas of just and unjust, of good and evil, are destroyed. No--though man acts from necessity, his actions are just and good relative to the society whose welfare he promotes. Every man is sensible, that he is compelled to love a certain mode of conduct in his neighbour. The ideas of pleasure and pain, vice and virtue, are founded upon our own essence.

Fatalism neither emboldens crime, nor stifles remorse, always felt by the wicked. Though they may have long escaped blame or punishment, they are not on that account better satisfied with themselves. Amidst perpetual pangs, struggles and agitations, they can neither find repose nor happiness. Every crime costs them bitter torments and sleepless nights. The system of fatality establishes morality, by demonstrating its necessity.

Fatality, it is said, discourages man, paralyses his mind, and breaks the ties that connect him with society. But does the

possession of sensibility depend upon myself? My sentiments are necessary, and founded upon nature. Though I know that all men must die, am I on that account, the less affected by the death of a wife, a child, a father, or a friend?

Fatalism ought to inspire man with an useful submission and resignation to his fate. The opinion, that all is necessary, will render him tolerant. He will lament and pardon his fellow-men. He will be humble and modest, from knowing that he has received every thing which he possesses.

Fatalism, it is said, degrades man into a mere machine. Such language is the invention of ignorance, respecting what constitutes his true dignity. Every machine is valuable, when it performs well the functions to which it is destined. Nature is but a machine, of which the human species makes a part. Whether the soul be mortal or immortal, we do not the less admire its grandeur and sublimity in a Socrates.

The opinion of fatalism is advantageous to man. It prevents useless remorse from disturbing his mind. It teaches him the propriety of enjoying with moderation, as pain ever accompanies excess. He will follow the paths of virtue, since every thing shews its necessity for rendering him estimable to others, and contented with himself.

CHAP. XIII.

*OF THE SOUL'S IMMORTALITY—THE DOGMA
OF A FUTURE STATE—FEAR OF DEATH.*

THE soul, step by step, follows the different states of the body. With the body, it comes into existence, is feeble in infancy, partakes of its pleasures and pains, its states of health and disease, activity or depression; with the body, is asleep or awake,—and yet it has been supposed immortal!

Nature inspires man with the love of existence, and the desire of its continuation produced the belief of the soul's immortality. Granting the desire of immortality to be natural, is that any proof of its reality? We desire the immortality of the body, and this desire is frustrated. Why should not the desire of the soul's immortality be frustrated also?

The soul is only the principle of sensibility. To think, to suffer, to enjoy, is to

feel. When the body, therefore, ceases to live, it cannot exercise sensibility. Where there are no senses, there can be no ideas. The soul only perceives by means of the organs:---how then is it possible for it to feel, after their dissolution?

We are told of divine power---but divine power cannot make a thing exist and not exist at the same time. It cannot make the soul think without the means necessary to acquire thoughts.

The destruction of his body always alarms man, notwithstanding the opinion of the soul's immortality; a sure proof, that he is more affected by the present reality, than by the hope of a distant futurity.

The very idea of death is revolting to man, yet he does every thing in his power to render it more frightful. It is a period which delivers us up defenceless to the undescribable rigours of a pitiless despot. This, it is said, is the strongest rampart against human irregularities. But what effect have

those ideas produced upon those who are, or at least pretend to be, persuaded of their truth? The great bulk of mankind seldom think of them; never, when hurried along by passion, prejudice, or example. If they produce any effect, it is only upon those to whom they are necessary in urging to good, and restraining from evil. They fill the hearts of good men with terror, but have not the smallest influence over the wicked.

Bad men may be found among infidels, but infidelity by no means implies wickedness. On the contrary, the man who thinks and meditates, better knows motives for being good, than he who permits himself to be blindly conducted by the motives of others. The man who does not expect another state of existence, is the more interested in prolonging his life, and rendering himself dear to his fellow men, in the only state of existence with which he is acquainted. The dogma of a future state destroys our happiness in this life. We sink under calamity, and remain in error, in expectation of being happy hereafter.

The present state has served as the model of the future. We feel pleasure and pain—hence a heaven and a hell. A body is necessary for enjoying heavenly pleasures—hence the dogma of a resurrection.

But whence has the idea of hell arisen? Because, like a sick person who clings even to a miserable existence, man prefers a life of pain to annihilation, which he considers as the greatest of calamities. That notion was besides counterbalanced by the idea of divine mercy.

Did not men, by a happy inconsistency, deviate in their conduct from those insolent ideas, the terrors ascribed to a future state are so strong, that they would sink into brutality, and the world become a desert.

Although this dogma may operate upon the passions, do we see fewer wicked men among those who are the most firmly persuaded of its truth? Men who think themselves restrained by those terrors, impute to them effects ascribable only to present

motives, such as timidity, and apprehension of the consequences of doing a bad action. Can the fears of a distant futurity restrain the man upon whom those of immediate punishment produce no effect?

Religion itself destroys the effect of those terrors. The remission of sins emboldens the wicked man to his last moment. This dogma is consequently opposed to the former.

The inspirers of those terrors admit them to be ineffectual--priests are continually lamenting that man is still hurried on by his vicious inclinations. In fine, for one timid man who is restrained by those terrors, there are millions whom they render ferocious, useless, and wicked, and turn aside from their duties to society, which they are continually tormenting.

CHAP. XIV.

OF EDUCATION—MORALITY AND LAWS SUFFICIENT TO RESTRAIN MAN—DESIRE OF IMMORTALITY—SUICIDE.

LET us not seek motives to action in this world, in a distant futurity. It is to experience and truth that we ought to have recourse, in providing remedies to those evils which are incident to our species. There, too, must be sought those motives which give the heart inclinations useful to society.

Education, above all, gives the mind habits, useful to the individual and to society. Men have no need, either of celestial rewards or supernatural punishments.

Government stands in no need of fables for its support. Present rewards and punishments are more efficacious than those of futurity, and they only ought to be employed. Man is every where a slave, and consequently void of honour; base, interested,

and dissimulating. These are the vices of governments. Man is every where deceived, and prevented from cultivating his reason; he is consequently stupid and unreasonable: every where he sees vice and crime honoured; and therefore concludes the practice of vice to lead to happiness, and that of virtue a sacrifice of himself. Every where he is miserable, and compelled to wrong his neighbours, that he may be happy. Heaven is held up to his view, but the earth arrests his attention. Here he will, at all events, be happy. Were mankind happier and better governed, there would be no need of resorting to fraud for governing them.

Cause man to view this state as alone capable of rendering him happy; bound his hopes to this life, instead of amusing him with tales of a futurity; shew him what effect his actions have over his neighbours; excite his industry; reward his talents; make him active, laborious, benevolent and virtuous; teach him to value the affection of his co-

temporaries, and let him know the consequences of their hatred.

However great the fear of death may be, chagrin, mental affliction, and misfortunes, cause us sometimes to regard it as a refuge from human injustice.

Suicide has been variously considered. Some have imagined that man has no right to break the contract which he has entered into with society. But upon examining the connections which subsist between man and nature, they will be found neither to be voluntary on the one part, nor reciprocal on the other. Man's will had no share in bringing him into the world, and he goes out of it against his inclination. All his actions are compulsatory. He can only love existence upon condition that it renders him happy.

By examining man's contract with society, we shall find that it is only conditional and reciprocal, and supposes mutual advantages to the contracting parties. Convenience is

the bond of connection. Is it broken? Man from that moment becomes free. Would we blame the man who, finding himself destitute of the means of subsistence in the city, retires into the country? He who dies, only retires into solitude.

The difference of opinion upon this as well as other subjects is necessary. The suicide will tell you, that in his situation, your conduct would be precisely similar: but to be in the situation of another, we must possess his organization, constitution, and passions, be, in short, himself, placed in the same circumstances, and actuated by the same motives. These maxims may be thought dangerous; but maxims alone do not lead men to the adoption of such violent resolutions. It is a constitution whetted by chagrin, a vicious organization, a derangement of the machine,---in a word, necessity. Death is a resource of which oppressed virtue should never be deprived.

CHAP. XV.

*OF MAN'S INTEREST, OR THE IDEAS HE FORMS
OF HAPPINESS—WITHOUT VIRTUE HE
CANNOT BE HAPPY.*

INTEREST is the object to which every man, according to his constitution, attaches happiness. The same happiness does not suit all men, as that of every man depends upon his particular organization. It may, therefore, be easily conceived, that in beings of such different natures, what constitutes the pleasure of one man, may be indifferent, or even disgusting to another. No man can determine, what will constitute the happiness of his neighbour.

Compelled, however, to judge of actions from their effects upon ourselves, we approve of the interest which animates them, according to the advantage which they produce to the human species. Thus, we admire valour, generosity, talents, and virtue.

It is the nature of man to love himself, to preserve his existence, and to render it happy. Experience and reason soon convince him, that he cannot alone command the means of procuring happiness. He sees other human beings engaged in the same pursuit, yet capable of assisting him to attain his desired object. He perceives, that they will favour his views in so far only as they coincide with their own interest. He will then conclude, that to secure his own happiness, he must conciliate their attachment, approbation, and assistance; and that it is necessary to make them find advantages in promoting his views. The procuring of those advantages to mankind, constitutes virtue. The wise man finds it his interest to be virtuous. Virtue is nothing more than the art of rendering a man happy, by contributing to the happiness of others. Merit and virtue are founded upon the nature and wants of man.

The virtuous man is always happy. In every face he reads the right which he has acquired over the heart. Vice is compel-

led to yield to virtue, whose superiority she blushingly acknowledges. Should the man of virtue sometimes languish in contempt or obscurity, the justice of his cause forms his consolation for the injustice of mankind. This consolation is denied to the wicked, whose hearts are the abode of anxiety, shame, and remorse.

CHAP. XVI

*THE ERRONEOUS OPINIONS ENTERTAINED BY
MAN OF HAPPINESS ARE THE TRUE
CAUSE OF HIS MISERY.*

Nothing can be more frivolous than the declamations of a gloomy philosophy against the love of power, grandeur, riches or pleasure. Every thing which promises advantages is a natural object of desire.

Paternal authority, those of rank, riches, genius, and talents are founded upon those advantages. It is only on account of the advantages they produce, that the sciences are estimable. Kings, rich and great men, may impose upon us by show and splendour, but it is from their benefits alone that they have legitimate power over us.

Experience teaches us, that the calamities of mankind have sprung from religious opinions. The ignorance of natural causes created gods, and imposture made them ter-

rible. Man lived unhappy, because he was told that God had condemned him to misery. He never entertained a wish of breaking his chains, as he was taught, that stupidity, the renouncing of reason, mental brutality, and spiritual debasement, were the means of obtaining eternal felicity. Kings, transformed by men into gods, seemed to inherit the right of government; and politics became the fatal art of sacrificing the happiness of all to the caprice of an individual.

The same blindness pervaded the science of morality. Instead of founding it upon the nature of man, and the relations which subsist between him and his fellows, or upon the duties resulting from those relations, religion established an imaginary connection between man and invisible beings. The gods, always painted as tyrants, became the model of human conduct. When man injured his neighbour, he thought he had offended God, and believed that he could pacify him by presents and humility. Religion corrupted morality, and the expiations of piety completed its destruction. Religious remedies were disgusting to human passions,

because unsuited to the nature of man; and they were called divine. Virtue appeared hateful to man, because it was represented to him as inimical to pleasure. In the observance of his duties, he saw nothing but a sacrifice of every thing dear; and real motives to induce such a sacrifice were never shewn him. The present prevailed over the future, the visible over the invisible. Man became wicked, as every thing told him, that to enjoy happiness it was necessary to be so.

Melancholy devotees, finding the objects of human desire incapable of satisfying the heart, denied them as pernicious and abominable. Blind physicians! who take the natural state of man for that of disease! Forbid man to love and to desire, and you wrest from his being! Bid him hate and despise himself, and you take away his strongest motives to virtue.

In spite of our complaints against fortune, there are many happy men in the world. There too are to be found sovereigns, ambitious of making nations happy; elevated souls, who encourage genius, suc-

cour indigence, and possess the desire of engaging admiration.

Poverty itself is not excluded from happiness. The poor man, habituated to labour, knows the sweets of repose. With limited knowledge, and few ideas, he has still fewer desires.

The sum total of good, exceeds that of evil. There is no happiness in the gross, tho' much of it in detail. In the whole course of a man's life few days are altogether unhappy. Habit lightens our sorrows, and suspended grief is enjoyment. Every want, at the moment of its gratification, becomes a pleasure. Absence of pain and of sickness is a happy state which we enjoy without being sensible of it. Hope assists us to support calamity. In short, the man who thinks himself the most unhappy, sees not the approach of death without terror, unless despair has, to his eyes, disfigured the whole of nature. When nature denies us any pleasure, she leaves open a door for our departure; and should we not make use of it, it is because we still find a pleasure in existence.

CHAP. XVII.

ORIGIN OF OUR IDEAS CONCERNING THE DIVINITY.

EVIL is necessary to man, since without it he would be ignorant of what is good. Without evil, he could neither have choice, will, passions, nor inclinations, he could neither have motives for loving nor hating. He would then be an automaton, and no longer man.

The evil which he saw in the universe, suggested to man the idea of a divinity. A crowd of evils, such as plagues, famines, earthquakes, inundations, and conflagrations, terrified him. But what ideas did he form of the cause which produced such effects? Man never imagined nature the cause of the calamities which afflicted herself. Finding no agent on earth, capable of producing such effects, he directed his attention to heaven, the imagined residence of beings, whose enmity destroyed his felicity in this world.

Terror was always associated with the idea of those powerful beings.

From known objects, men judge of unknown. Man gave, from himself, a will, intelligence, and passions similar to his own, to every unknown cause which acted upon him. Influenced himself by submission and presents, he employed these to gain the favour of the Divinity.

The business relative to those offerings was confided to old men, and much ceremony was used in making them. The ceremonies were continued, and became custom. Thus religion and priestcraft were introduced into the world.

The mind of man (whose essence it is to labour incessantly upon unknown objects, to which it originally attached consequence, and dares not afterwards coolly examine) soon modified those systems.

By a necessary consequence of those opinions, nature was soon stripped of all pow-

er...Man could not conceive the possibility of nature's permitting him to suffer, were she not herself subject to a power, inimical to his happiness, and having an interest in punishing and afflicting him.

CHAP. XVIII.

OF MYTHOLOGY AND THEOLOGY.

MAN originally worshipped nature. All things were spoken of allegorically, and every part of nature was personified. Hence a Saturn, Jupiter, Apollo, &c. The vulgar did not perceive, that it was nature and her parts which were thus allegorised. The source from which gods were taken was soon forgotten. An incomprehensible being was formed from the power of nature, and called its mover. Thus nature was separated from herself, and became considered as an inanimate mass incapable of action.

It became necessary to ascribe qualities to this moving power. This being, or latterly, spirit, intelligence, incorporeal being, that is to say, a substance different from any that we know, was seen by nobody. Men could only ascribe it to qualities from themselves. What they called human

perfections, was the model in miniature of the perfection of the Divinity.

But on the other hand, in viewing the calamities and disorders to which the world was so subject, why not attribute to him malice, imprudence, and caprice? This difficulty was thought removed in creating enemies to him. This is the origin of the rebellious angels. Notwithstanding his power, he could not subdue them. He is understood to be in the same situation with regard to those men who offend him.

Having thus, in their own opinion, satisfactorily accounted for human misery, another difficulty occurred. It could not be denied, that just men were sometimes included in the punishments of God.

It was then said, that because man had sinned, God might avenge himself upon the innocent,---like those wicked princes, who proportion punishment more to the grandeur and power of the party offended, than to the magnitude and reality of the offence.

The most wicked men, and the most tyrannical governments, have been the models of a divinity, and his divine administration.

CHAP. XIX.

ABSURD AND EXTRAORDINARY THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS.

GOD, we are told, is good,—but God is the author of all things. All the calamities which afflict mankind, must of course be imputed to him. Good and evil suppose two principles: if there be only one, he must alternately be good and wicked.

God, say theologians, is just, and evil is a chastisement for the injuries which men have done him. To offend any one, supposes the existence of connections between the offending and offended parties. To offend is to cause pain: but how can a feeble creature like man, who has received his very existence from God, act against an infinite power, which never consents to sin or disorder?

Justice supposes, the disposition of rendering to every one his due; and we are

told, that God owes us nothing: that, without prejudice to his equity, he may plunge the work of his hand into an abyss of misery. Evils are said only to be temporary---surely then they are unjust, during a certain period. God chastises his friends for their good: but if God be good, can he permit them to suffer, even for a moment? If God be omniscient, why try his friends, from whom he knows, he has nothing to fear? If omnipotent, why be disturbed by the petty plots raised against him?

What good man does not wish to render his fellow-creatures happy? Why does not God make man happy? No man has reason to be contented with his lot---What can be said to all this? God's judgments are impenetrable. In this case, how can men pretend to reason about him? Since unsearchable, upon what foundation can a single virtue be attributed to him? What idea can we form of a justice, which bears no resemblance to that of man?

His justice, is said to be balanced by his mercy,---but his mercy derogates from his justice. If unchangeable, can he for a moment alter his designs?

God, say the priests, created the world for his own glory---But already superior to every thing, was any addition wanting to his glory? The love of glory is the desire of being distinguished among our equals. If God be susceptible of it, why does he permit any one to abuse his favours? or why are they insufficient to make us act according to his wishes? Because he has made me a free agent. But why grant me a liberty, which he knows I will abuse?

In consequence of this freedom, men will be eternally punished in the other world, for the faults they have committed in this life. But why punish eternally the faults of a moment? what would we think of the king, that eternally punishes one of his subjects, who, in the moment of intoxication, had offended his pride, without however doing him any real injury, especially had he himself

previously instructed him? Would we consider the monarch as all powerful, who is forced to permit all his subjects, with the exception of a few faithful friends, to insult his laws, and even his own person, and thwart him in every measure?

It is said, that the qualities of God are so unlike to those of man, and so eminent, that no resemblance whatever subsists between them. But, in this case, how can we form any idea of them? Why does theology presume to announce them?

But God has spoken, and made himself known to man. When, and to whom? where are those divine oracles? in absurd and contradictory collations, where the God of wisdom speaks an obscure, insidious, and foolish language; where the God of benevolence, is cruel and sanguinary, where the God of justice is unjust, partial, and ordains iniquity; where the God of mercy decrees the most horrid punishment to the victims of his wrath.

The relations subsisting between God and man, can be only founded upon moral qualities. But if man be ignorant of these, how can they serve as the model for his conduct? how can he possibly imitate them?

There is no proportion between God and man; and where that is wanting, there can be no relations. If God be incorporeal, how can he act upon bodies? how can they act upon him, so as to give him offence, disturb his repose, and excite his anger? If the potter be displeased with the bad shape of the vessel he has made, whom has he but himself to blame for it?

If God owes man nothing, man owes him as little. Relations must be reciprocal, and duties are founded upon mutual wants. If these are useless to God, he cannot owe anything for them, and man cannot offend him---God's authority can only be founded upon the good which he bestows upon men; and their duties must solely rest upon the favours which they expect from him---If

God do not owe man happiness, every relation between them is annihilated.

How can we reconcile the qualities ascribed to God with his metaphysical attributes? How can a pure spirit act like man, a corporeal being? A pure spirit can neither hear our prayers, nor be softened by our miseries. If immutable, he cannot change. If all nature, without being God, can exist in conjunction with him, he cannot be infinite--- If he either suffers, or cannot prevent, the evils and disorders of the world, he cannot be omnipotent. He cannot be every where, if he is not in man while he commits sin, or goes out of him at the moment of its commission.

A revelation would prove malice in the Deity. It supposes, that he has for a long time denied man a knowledge necessary to his happiness. If it be made to a small number only, it is a partiality inconsistent with his justice. Revelation would destroy God's immutability, as it supposes him to have done at one period what he wished

not to do at another. What kind of revelation is it, which cannot be understood? If one man only were incapable of understanding it, that circumstance would be alone sufficient to convict God of injustice.

CHAP. XX.

*EXAMINATION OF DR. CLARKE'S PROOFS OF
THE EXISTENCE OF A DEITY.*

ALL men, it is said, believe in the existence of a deity, and the voice of nature is alone sufficient to establish it. It is an innate idea.

But what proves that idea to be acquired, is the nature of the opinion, which varies from age to age, and from nation to nation. That it is unfounded, is evident from this, that men have perfected every science, which has a real object, while that of God has been always in nearly the same state. There is no subject upon which men have entertained such a variety of opinions.

Admitting every nation to have a form of worship, that circumstance by no means proves the existence of a God. The universality of an opinion does not prove its truth. Have not all nations believed in

the existence of witchcraft and of apparitions? Previous to Copernicus, did not all men believe that the earth was immoveable, and that the sun turned round it?

The ideas of God and of his qualities, are only founded upon the opinions of our fathers, infused into us by education ; by habits contracted in infancy, and strengthened by example and authority. Hence the opinion, that all men are born with an idea of the Divinity. We retain those ideas, without ever having reflected upon them.

Dr. Clarke has adduced the strongest arguments, which have ever yet been advanced, in support of the existence of a Deity--- His propositions may be reduced into the following :

1. ' Something has existed from all eternity.' Yes; but what is it? Why not matter, rather than spirit? When a thing exists, existence must be essential to it. That which cannot be annihilated, necessarily exists ; such is matter. Matter, therefore, has always existed.

2. 'An independent and unchangeable being has existed from all eternity.'

First of all, what is this being? Is it independent of its own essence? No; for it cannot make the beings whom it produces act otherwise, than according to their given properties. One body only depends upon another, in so far as it owes existence and form of action to it. By this title alone can matter be dependent. But if matter be eternal, it cannot be indebted for its existence to another being; and if eternal and self-existing, it is evident, that, in virtue of those qualities, it contains within itself every thing requisite for action. Matter, being eternal, has no need of a maker.

Is this being unchangeable? No; as such a being could neither will nor produce successive actions. If this being created matter, there was a time in which it had resolved that matter should not exist, and another, that it should. This being, therefore, cannot be unchangeable.

3. ' This eternal, immutable and independent being is self-existent.' But since matter is eternal, why should it not be self-existent.

4. ' The essence of a self-existent being is incomprehensible.' True, and such is the essence of matter.

5. ' A necessarily self-existing being is necessarily eternal.' But it would have that property in common with matter.--why then separate this being from the universe?

6. ' The self-existing being must be infinite, and every where present.' Infinite! be it so.--but we have no reason to think that matter is finite.--Every where present! No, matter certainly occupies a part of space, and from that part, at least, the Divinity must be excluded.

7. ' The necessarily self-existent being must be one.' Yes, if nothing can exist out of it. But can any one deny the existence of the universe?

8. 'The self-existent being is necessarily intelligent.' But intelligence is a human quality. To have intelligence, thoughts and senses are necessary. A being that has senses is material, and cannot be a pure spirit. But does this being, this great whole, possess a particular intelligence which puts it in motion. Since nature contains intelligent beings, why strip her of intelligence?

9. 'The self-existent being is a free agent.' But does God find no difficulty in executing his plans? Does he wish the continuance of evil, or can he not prevent it? In that case, he either permits sin, or is not free. He can only act according to the laws of his essence---His will is determined by the wisdom and qualities which are attributed to him: He is not free.

10. 'The supreme cause of all things possesses infinite power.' But if man be free to commit sin, what becomes of God's infinite power?

11. 'The author of all things is necessarily wise.' If he be the author of all things,

he is author of many things which we think very foolish.

12. 'The supreme cause necessarily possesses every moral perfection.' The idea of perfection is abstract. It is relative to our mode of perception, that a thing appears perfect to us. When injured by his works, and forced to lament the evils we suffer, do we think God perfect? Is he so in respect to his works, where we universally see confusion blended with order?

If it be pretended, that we cannot know God, and that nothing positive can be said about him, we may well be allowed to doubt of his existence. If incomprehensible, can we be blamed for not understanding him?

We are told, that common sense and reason are sufficient to demonstrate his existence; but we are also told, that in these matters reason is an unfaithful guide. Conviction, besides, is always the effect of evidence and demonstration.

CHAP. XXI.

EXAMINATION OF THE PROOFS OF THE EXISTENCE OF A DIVINITY.

No variety, it is said, can arise from a blind physical necessity, which must always be uniform; that the variety we see around us can only proceed from the will and ideas of a necessarily existing being.

Why should not this variety arise from natural causes from a self-acting matter, whose motion joins and combines various and analagous elements? Is not a loaf of bread produced from the combination of meal, yest, and water? Blind necessity, is a name which we give to a power, with whose energy we are unacquainted.

But it is said, that the regular movements and admirable order of the universe, and the benefits daily bestowed upon man, announce wisdom and intelligence. Those movements are the necessary effects of the

laws of nature, which we call either good or bad, as they affect ourselves.

Animals, it is asserted, are a proof of the powerful cause which created them. The power of nature cannot be doubted. Are animals, on account of the harmony of their parts, the work of an invisible being? They are continually changing, and finally perish. If God cannot form them otherwise, he is neither free nor powerful; if he change his mind, he is not immutable; if he allow machines, whom he has created sensible, to experience sorrow, he is destitute of bounty; if he cannot make his works more durable, he is deficient in skill.

Man who thinks himself the chief work in nature, proves either the malice or incapacity of his pretended author. His machine is more subject to derangement than that of other beings. Who, upon the loss of a loved object, would not rather be a beast or a stone, than a human being? Better be an inanimated rock, than a devotee trembling under the yoke of his God, and

foreseeing still greater torments in a future state of existence !

Is it possible, say theologians, to conceive the universe to be without a maker, who watches over his workmanship ? Shew a statue or a watch to a savage, which he has not before seen, and he will at once conclude it to be the work of a skillful artist.

1. Nature is very powerful and industrious ; but we are as little acquainted with the manner in which she forms a stone or a mineral, as a brain organized like that of Newton. Nature can do all things, and the existence of any thing proves itself to be one of her productions. Let us not conclude, that the works which most astonish us, are not of her production.

2. The savage to whom a watch is shewn, will either have ideas of human industry, or he will not. If he has, he will at once consider it to be the production of a being of his own species ; if not, he will never think

it the work of a being like himself. He will consequently attribute it to a genius or spirit, *i. e.* to an unknown power, whom he will suppose capable of producing effects beyond those of human beings. By this, the savage will only prove his ignorance of what man is capable of performing.

3. Upon opening and examining the watch, the savage will perceive, that it must be a work of man. He will at once perceive, its difference from the immediate works of nature, whom he never saw produce wheels of a polished metal. But he will never suppose a material work, the production of an immaterial being. In viewing the world we see a material cause of its phenomena, and this cause is nature, whose energy is known to those who study her.

Let us not be told, that we thus attribute every thing to blind causes, and to a fortuitous concourse of atoms---We call those causes blind of which we are ignorant! We attribute effects to chance, when we do not perceive the tie which connects them

with their causes. Nature is neither a blind cause, nor does she act by chance--- All her productions are necessary, and always the effect of fixed laws. There may be ignorance on our part, but the words, Spirit, God, and Intelligence, will not remedy, but only increase that ignorance.

This is a sufficient answer to the eternal objection made to the partizans of nature, of attributing every thing to chance. Chance is a word void of meaning, and only exposes the ignorance of those who use it. We are told that a regular work cannot be formed by the combinations of chance; that an epic poem, like the Iliad, can never be produced by letters thrown together at random. Certainly not. It is nature that combines, according to fixed laws, an organized head capable of producing such a work. Nature bestows such a temperament and organization upon a brain, that a head, constituted like that of Homer, placed in the same circumstances, must necessarily produce a poem like the Iliad, un-

less it be denied, that the same causes produce the same effects.

Every thing is the effect of the combinations of matter---The most admirable of her productions which we behold, are only the natural effects of her parts, differently arranged. [NOTE E.]

CHAP. XXII.

OF DEISM, OPTIMISM, AND FINAL CAUSES.

ADMITTING the existence of a God, and even supposing him possessed of views and of intelligence, what is the result to mankind? What connection can subsist between us and such a being? Will the good or bad effects proceeding from his omnipotence and providence, be other than those of his wisdom, justice, and eternal decrees? Can we suppose, that he will change his plans on our account? Overcome by our prayers, will he cause the fire to cease from burning, or prevent a falling building from crushing those who are passing beneath it? What can we ask of him, if he be compelled to give a free course to the events which he has ordained? Opposition on our part would be frenzy.

Why deprive me of my God, says the happy enthusiast, who favours me, whom I view as a benevolent sovereign continually

watching over me? why, says the unfortunate man, deprive me of my God, whose consoling idea dries up my tears!

I answer by asking them, on what do they found the goodness which they attribute to God? For one happy human being, how many do we not see miserable? Is he good to all men? How many calamities do we not daily see, while he is deaf to our prayers?---Every man, therefore, must judge of the Divinity, according as he is affected by circumstances.

In finding every thing good in the world, where good is necessarily attended with evil, the optimists seem to have renounced the evidence of their senses. Good is, according to them, the end of the whole--But the whole can have no end;--if it had, it would cease being the whole.

God, say some men, knows how to benefit us by the evils which he permits us to suffer in this life. But, how do they know this? Since he has treated us ill in this life,

what assurance have we of a better treatment in a future state? What good can possibly result from the plagues and famines which desolate the earth? It is necessary to create another world to exculpate the Divinity from blame, for the calamities he makes us suffer in the present.

Some men suppose, that God, after creating matter out of nothing, abandoned it for ever to its primary impulse. These men only want a God to produce matter, and suppose him to live in complete indifference as to the fate of his workmanship. Such a God is a being quite useless to man.

Others have imagined certain duties to be due by man to his Creator---Others suppose, that in consequence of his justice, he will reward and punish---They make a man of their God. But these attributes contradict each other ; for, by supposing him the author of all things, he must consequently be the author of both good and evil. We might as well believe all things.

It is asked of us, Would you rather depend upon blind nature, than a good, wise, and intelligent being?

But, 1. Our interest does not determine the reality of things. 2. This being, so supereminently wise and good, is presented to us as a foolish tyrant; and it would be better for man to depend upon blind nature, than upon such a being. 3. Nature, when well studied, teaches us the means of becoming happy, so far, at least, as our essence will permit. She informs us of the proper means of acquiring happiness.

CHAP. XXIII.

EXAMINATION OF THE SUPPOSED ADVANTAGES, WHICH RESULT TO MAN FROM THE NOTIONS OF A DIVINITY, OR THEIR INFLUENCE UPON MORALS, POLITICS, SCIENCE, THE WELFARE OF NATIONS AND OF INDIVIDUALS.

MORALITY originally having only for its object, the self-preservation of man, and his welfare in society, had nothing to do with religious systems. Man, from his own mind, found motives for moderating his passions, and resisting his vicious inclinations, and for rendering himself useful and estimable to those of whom he constantly stood in need.

Those systems which describe God as a tyrant, cannot render him an object of imitation to man. They paint him jealous, vindictive, and interested. Thus religion divides men. They dispute with and persecute one another, and never reproach

themselves with crimes committed in the name of God.

The same spirit pervades religion. There, we hear of nothing but victims; and even the pure spirit of the Christians must have his own son murdered to appease his fury.

Man requires a morality, founded upon nature and experience.

Do we find real virtue among priests? Are these men, so firmly persuaded of God's existence, the less addicted to debauchery and intemperance? Upon seeing their conduct, we are apt to think, that they are entirely undeceived in their opinions of the Divinity.

Does the idea of a rewarding and avenging god impose upon those princes, who derive their power, as they pretend, from the Divinity himself? Are those wicked and remorseless monarchs, who spread destruction around them, atheists? They call the Divinity to witness, at the very mo-

ment when they are about to violate their oaths.

Have religious systems bettered the morals of the people? Religion, in their opinion, supersedes every thing. Its ministers, content with supporting dogmas and rites, useful to their own power, multiply troublesome ceremonies, with a view of drawing profit, by their slaves transgressing them. Behold the work of religion and priestcraft, in a sale of the favours of Heaven! - - The unmeaning words, impiety, blasphemy, sacrilege, and heresy, were invented by priests; and those pretended crimes have been punished with the greatest severities.

What must be the fate of youth under such preceptors? From infancy the human mind is poisoned with unintelligible notions, and disturbed by phantoms, genius is cramped by a mechanical devotion, and man wholly prejudised against reason and truth.

Does religion form citizens, fathers, or husbands? It is placed above every thing. The fanatic is told, that he must obey God, and not man; consequently, when he thinks himself acting in the cause of Heaven, he will rebel against his country, and abandon his family.

Were education directed to useful objects, incalculable benefits would arise therefrom to mankind. Notwithstanding their religious education, how many men are subject to criminal habits. In spite of a hell, so horrid even in description, what crowds of abandoned criminals fill our cities. Those men would recoil with horror from him who expressed any doubts of God's existence. From the temple, where sacrifices have been made, divine oracles uttered, and vice denounced in the name of Heaven, every man returns to his former criminal courses.

Are condemned thieves and murderers either atheists or unbelievers? those wretches believe in a God. They have continually heard him spoken of, neither are they

strangers to the punishment which he has destined to crimes. But a hidden God, and distant punishments, are ill calculated to restrain crimes, which present and certain chastisements do not always prevent.

The man who would tremble at the commission of the smallest crime in the face of the world, does not hesitate for a moment when he thinks himself only seen by God. So feeble is the idea of divinity, when opposed to human passions.

Does the most religious father, in advising his son, speak to him of a vindictive God? His constitution destroyed by debauchery, his fortune ruined by gaming, the contempt of society—these are the motives he employs.

The idea of a God is both useless and contrary to sound morality:—it neither procures happiness to society nor to individuals. Men always occupied with phantoms, live in perpetual terror. They neglect their most important concerns, and pass a miserable ex-

istence, in groans, prayers, and expiations. They imagine that they appease God by subjecting themselves to every evil. What fruit does society derive from the lugubrious notions of those pious madmen? they are either misanthropes useless to themselves, and to the world, or fanatics who disturb the peace of nations. If religious ideas console a few timid and peaceable enthusiasts, they render miserable during life millions of others, infinitely more consistent with their principles. The man who can be tranquil under a terrible God, must be a being destitute of reason.

CHAP. XXIV.

RELIGIOUS OPINIONS CANNOT BE THE FOUNDATION OF MORALITY. — PARALLEL BETWEEN RELIGIOUS AND NATURAL MORALITY. — RELIGION IMPEDES THE PROGRESS OF MIND.

ARBITRARY and inconsistent opinions, contradictory notions, abstract and unintelligible speculations, can never serve as a foundation to morality; which must rest upon clear and evident principles, deduced from the nature of man, and founded upon experience and reason. Morality is always uniform, and never follows the imagination, passions, or interest of man. It must be stable and equal for all men, never varying with time or place. Morality, being the science of the duties of man living in society, must be founded on sentiments inherent in our nature. In a word, its basis must be necessity.

Theology is wrong in supposing that mutual wants, the desire of happiness, and the

evident interest of societies and of individuals, are insufficient motives to influence man. The ministers of religion subject morality to human passions, by making it flow from God. They found morality upon nothing, by founding it upon a chimera.

The ideas entertained of God, owing to the different views which are taken of him, vary with the fancy of every man, from age to age, from one country to another.

Compare the morality of religion with that of nature, and they will be found essentially different. Nature invites men to love one another, to preserve their existence, and to augment their happiness. Religion commands him to love a terrible God, to hate himself, and sacrifice his soul's most precious joys to his frightful idol. Nature bids man consult his reason; religion tells him that reason is a fallible guide. Nature bids him search for truth; religion prohibits all investigation. Nature bids man be sociable, and love his neighbours; religion commands him to shun society, and

sequester himself from the world. Nature enjoins tenderness and affection to the husband ; religion considers matrimony as a state of impurity and corruption. Nature bids the wicked man resist his shameful propensities, as destructive to his happiness ; religion, while she forbids crime, promises pardon to the criminal, by humbling himself before its ministers, by sacrifices, offerings, ceremonies, and prayers.

The human mind, prevented by religion, has hardly advanced a single step in improvement. Logic has been uniformly employed to prove the most palpable absurdities. Theology has inspired kings with false ideas of their rights, by telling them, that they hold their power from God. The laws became subject to the caprices of religion. Physics, anatomy, and natural history, were only permitted to see with the eyes of superstition. The most clear facts were refuted, when inconsistent with religious hypothesis.

Is a question in natural philosophy, solv-

ed by saying, that phenomena, such as volcanos or deluges, are proofs of Divine wrath? Instead of ascribing wars and famines to the anger of God, would it not have been more useful, to shew men that they proceeded from their own folly, and from the tyranny of their princes. Men would then have sought a remedy to their evils in a better government. Experience would have convinced man of the inefficacy of fasts, prayers, sacrifices and processions, which never produced any good.

CHAP. XXV.

MAN, FROM THE IDEAS WHICH ARE GIVEN OF THE
DEITY, CAN CONCLUDE NOTHING--THEIR AB-
SURDITY AND USELESSNESS.

SUPPOSING the existence of an intelligence, like that held out by theology, it must be owned, that no man has hitherto corresponded to the wishes of providence.-- God wishes himself to be known by men, and even the theologians can form no idea of him. Admitting that they did so, that his being and attributes are evident to them, do the rest of mankind enjoy the same advantages?

Few men are capable of profound and constant meditation. The common people of both sexes, condemned to toil for subsistence, never reflect. People of fashion, all females, and young people of both sexes, only occupied about their passions and their pleasures, think as little as the vulgar. There are not, perhaps, ten men of a million of people, who have seriously asked themselves, what they

understand by God ; and even fewer can be found who have made a problem of the existence of a divinity : yet conviction supposes evidence, which can alone produce certainty. Who are the men, that are convinced of Gods existence ? Entire nations worship God upon the authority of their fathers and their priests. Confidence, authority and habit, stand in the stead of conviction and proof. All rests upon authority ; reason and investigation are universally prohibited.

Is the conviction of the existence of a God, so important to all men, reserved only to priests and the inspired ? Do we find the same unanimity among them, as with those occupied in studying the knowledge of useful arts ? If God wishes to be known to all men, why does he not shew himself to the whole world, in a less equivocal and more convincing manner than he has hitherto done in those relations, which seem to charge him with partiality ? Are fables and metamorphoses the only means which he can make use of ? Why have not his

name, attributes, and will, been written in characters legible by all men?

By ascribing to him contradictory qualities, theology has put its God in a situation where he cannot act. Admitting that he existed with such extraordinary and contradictory qualities, we can neither reconcile to common sense nor to reason, the conduct and worship prescribed towards him.

If infinitely good, why fear him? if infinitely wise, why interest ourselves about our fate? if omniscient, why tell him of our wants, or fatigue him with our prayers? if every where, why erect to him temples? if master of all, why make him sacrifices and offerings? if just, whence has arisen the belief, that he will punish man, whom he has created weak and feeble? if omnipotent, how can he be offended or resisted? if reasonable, why be angry with a blind creature, like man? if immutable, why do we pretend to change his decrees? and if inconceivable, why presume to form any idea of him?

But if, on the other hand, he be irascible, vindictive, and wicked, we are not bound to offer up to him our prayers. If a tyrant, how can we love him? How can a master be loved by his slaves, whom he has permitted to offend him, that he might have the pleasure of punishing them? If all powerful, how can man fly from his wrath? if unchangeable, how can man escape his fate?

Thus in whatever point of view we consider God, we can neither render him prayers nor worship.

Even admitting the existence of a Deity, full of equity, reason, and benevolence, what would a virtuous atheist have to fear, who should unexpectedly find himself in the presence of a being, whom, during life, he had misconceived and neglected?

O God, he might say, inconceivable Being whom I could not discover, pardon, that the limited understanding thou hast given me, has been inadequate to thy discovery. How could I discover thy spiritual essence

by the aid of sense alone? I could not submit my mind to the yoke of men, who, confessedly, not more enlightened than I, agreed only among themselves in bidding me renounce the reason which thou hast given me. But, O God, if thou lovest thy creatures, I have also loved them. If virtue pleaseth thee, my heart ever honoured it. I have consoled the afflicted; never did I devour the substance of the poor---I have ever been just, bountiful, and compassionate.

In spite of reason, men are often, by disease, brought back to the prejudices of infancy. This is most frequently the case with sick people: upon the approach of death, they tremble, because the machine is enfeebled; the brain being unable to perform its functions, they of course fall into deliriums---Our systems experience the changes of our body.

CHAP. XXVI.

APOLOGY FOR THE SENTIMENTS CONTAINED
IN THIS WORK.

MEN tremble at the very name of an atheist. But who is an atheist? The man who brings mankind back to reason and experience, by destroying prejudices inimical to their happiness; who has no need of resorting to supernatural powers, in explaining the phenomena of nature.

It is madness, say theologians, to suppose incomprehensible motions in nature. Is it madness to prefer the known to the unknown? to consult experience and the evidence of our senses? to address ourselves to reason, and prefer her oracles to the decision of Sophists, who even confess themselves ignorant of the God they announce?

When we see priests so angry with atheistical opinions, should we not suspect the justice of their cause? Sportive tyrants! 'tis ye who have defamed the Divinity, by be-

smearing him with the blood of the wretched! You are the truly impious. Impiety consists in insulting the God in whom it believes. He who does not believe in a God cannot injure him, and cannot of course be impious.

On the other hand, if piety consists in serving our country, in being useful to our fellow creatures, and in observing the laws of nature, an atheist is pious, honest, and virtuous, when his conduct is regulated by the laws which reason and virtue prescribe to him.

Men, we are told, who have reason to expect future happiness, never fall into atheism. The interest of the passions, and the fear of punishment, alone makes atheists.--- But men who endeavour to enlighten that reason, which imprints every idea of virtue, are not calculated to reject the existence of a future state, from an apprehension of its chastisements.

It is true, the number of atheists is considerable, because enthusiasm has dazzled the human mind, and the progress of error been so very great, that few men have courage to search for truth. If by atheists are meant those, who, guided by experience, and the evidence of their senses, see nothing in nature but what really exists; if by atheists are meant natural philosophers, who think every thing may be accounted for by the laws of motion, without having recourse to a chimerical power; if by atheists those who know not what a spirit is, and who reject a phantom whose opposite qualities only disturb mankind; doubtless, there are many atheists: and their number would be greater, were the knowledge of physics and sound reason more generally disseminated.

An atheist does not believe in the existence of a God---No man can be certain of the existence of an inconceivable being, in whom inconsistent qualities are said to be united. In this sense, many theologians would be atheists, as well as those credu-

lous beings, who prostrate themselves before a being, of whom they have no other idea than that given them by men, avowedly comprehending nothing of him themselves.

CHAP. XXVII.

IS ATHEISM COMPATIBLE WITH SOUND MORALITY?

THOUGH the atheist deny the existence of a God, he neither denies his own existence nor that of other men ; he cannot deny the existence of relations which subsist between men, nor the duties which necessarily result from those relations. He cannot doubt the existence of morality, or the science of the relations which subsist between men living in society. Though he may sometimes seem to forget the moral principles, it does not follow, that they do not exist. He may act inconsistently with his principles ; but a philosophical infidel is not so much an object of dread, as an enthusiastic priest. Though the atheist disbelieves in the existence of a God, can it be thought, that he will indulge in excesses dangerous to himself, and subject to punishment ?

Whether would men be happier under

an atheistical prince, or a believing tyrant, continually bestowing presents upon priests? Would we not have to fear religious quarrels from the latter? Would not the name of God, of which the monarch avails himself, sometimes serve as an excuse for the persecutions of the tyrant? Would he not at least hope to find in religion a pardon for his crimes?

Much inconveniency may arise from making morality depend upon the existence of a God. When corrupt minds discover the falshood of those suppositions, they will think virtue itself, like the Deity, a mere chimera, and see no reason to practise it in life. It is, however, as beings living in society, that we are bound by morality---Our duties must always be the same, whether a God exist or not.

If some atheists deny the existence of good and of evil, it only proves their own ignorance. A natural sentiment causes man to love pleasure and hate pain. Ask the man who denies the existence of virtue and vice,

would he be indifferent at being robbed, calumniated, betrayed, and insulted? His answer will prove that he makes a distinction between men's actions; that the distinctions of good and evil, depend neither upon human conventions, nor the idea of a Deity; neither do they depend upon the rewards or punishments of a future state of existence.

The atheist, believing only in the present life, at least wishes to live happy. Atheism, says Bacon, renders man prudent, as it limits his views to this life. Men accustomed to study and meditation, never are bad citizens.

Some men, undeceived themselves in religious matters, pretend, that religion is useful to the people, since, without it, they could not be governed. But has religion had an useful influence upon popular manners? It enslaves, without making obedient: it makes idiots, whose sole virtue consists in a blind submission to paltry and silly ceremonies, to which more consequence is at-

tached, than to real virtue, or pure morality. Children are only frightened for a moment by imaginary terrors. It is only by shewing men the truth, that they can appreciate its value, and find motives for cultivating it.

It is chiefly among nations, where superstition, aided by authority, makes its heavy yoke be felt, and imprudently abuses its power, that the number of atheists is considerable. Oppression infuses energy into the mind, and occasions a strict investigation into the causes of its evils. Calamity is a powerful goad, stimulating the mind to the side of truth.

CHAP. XXVIII.

*MOTIVES WHICH LEAD TO ATHEISM—CAN
THIS SYSTEM BE DANGEROUS?*

WHAT interest, we are asked, can men have to deny the existence of God? But are not the tyrannies exercised in his name, and the slavery in which men groan under priests, sufficient motives for determining us to examine into the pretensions of a class that occasions so much mischief in the world? Can there be a stronger motive than the incessant dread excited by the belief in a being who is angry with our most secret thoughts, whom we may unknowingly offend, who is never pleased with us, who gives man evil inclinations, that he may punish him for them, who eternally punishes the crimes of a moment?

The deist will tell us, that we only paint superstition; but such a supposition will never prove the existence of a deity. If the God of superstition be a disgusting be-

ing, that of deism must always be inconsistent and impossible.

The depraved devotee finds in religion a thousand pretexts for being wicked. The atheist has no cloak of zeal to cover his vengeance and fury.

No sensible atheist thinks, that the cruel actions caused by religion are capable of being justified. If the atheist be a bad man, he knows when he is committing wrong. Neither God nor his priests can then persuade him that he has been acting properly.

The indecent and criminal conduct of its ministers, say some men, proves nothing against religion. May not the same thing be said of an atheist with good principles and a bad practice? Atheism, it is said, destroys the force of oaths; but perjury is common enough with those nations, who boast the most of their piety. Are the most holy kings faithful to their oaths? Does not religion itself sometimes grant a dispensa-

tion from them, especially when the perjury is beneficial to the holy cause? Do criminals refrain from swearing, when necessary to their justification?—Oaths are a foolish formality, which neither impose upon villains, nor add any thing to the engagements of good men.

It has been asked, whether a people ever existed that had not some idea of a Deity; and, could a nation of atheists exist?

A timid and ignorant animal, like man, necessarily becomes superstitious under calamity. He either creates a God himself, or takes that which is offered him by another. But the savage does not draw the same conclusion from the existence of his gods as the polished citizen. A nation of savages content themselves with a rude worship, and never reason about the Divinity. It is only in civilized states that men subtilize those ideas.

A numerous society, without either religion, morality, government, laws, or prin-

ciples, doubtless cannot exist, since it would only be an assemblage of men, mutually disposed to injure one another. But in spite of all the religions in the world, are not all human societies nearly in that state? A society of atheists, governed by good laws, whom rewards excite to virtue, and punishments deter from crime, would be infinitely more virtuous than those religious societies, in which every thing tends to disturb the mind, and to deprave the heart.

We cannot expect to take away from a whole nation its religious ideas, because they have been inculcated from the tenderest infancy. But the vulgar, in the long run, may reap advantages from labours, of which they at present have no idea. Atheism, having truth on its side, will gradually insinuate itself into the mind, and become familiar to man.

CHAP. XXIX.

ABRIDGEMENT OF THE SYSTEM OF NATURE.

O YE, says Nature, who, according to the impulse which I have given you, tend every instant towards happiness, do not resist my sovereign law ; labour at your felicity ; enjoy without fear ; be happy.

Return, O devotee, to Nature. She will banish from thy heart the terrors which are overwhelming thee. Cease to contemplate futurity. Live for thyself, and thy fellow creatures. I approve of thy pleasures, while they neither injure thee nor others, whom I have rendered necessary to thy happiness.

Let humanity interest thee in the fate of thy fellow creature. Consider, that, like him, thou mayest one day be miserable. Dry up the tears of distressed virtue and injured innocence. Let the mild fervour of friendship, and the esteem of a loved companion, make thee forget the pains of life.

Be just, since equity supports the human race. Be good, as bounty attaches every heart. Be indulgent, since thou livest among beings weak like thyself. Be modest, as pride hurts the self-love of every human being. Pardon injuries, as vengeance eternises hatred. Do good to him who injures thee, that thou mayest shew thyself greater than he, and also gain his friendship. Be moderate, temperate, and chaste, since voluptuousness, intemperance, and excess, destroy thy being, and render thee contemptible.

It is I who punish the crimes of this world. The wicked man may escape human laws, but mine he can never fly from. Abandon thyself to intemperance, and man will not punish thee, but I will punish thee, by shortening thy existence. If addicted to vice, thou wilt perish under thy fatal habits. Princes, whose power surpasseth human laws, tremble under mine. I punish them by infusing suspicion and terror into their minds. Look into the heart of those criminals, whose smiling countenances con-

ceal an anguished soul. See the covetous miser, haggard and emaciated, groaning under wealth, acquired by the sacrifice of himself. View the gay voluptuary secretly writhing under a broken constitution; See the mutual hatred and contempt which subsist between the adulterous pair! the liar deprived of all confidence,---the icy heart of ingratitude, which no act of kindness can dissolve,---the iron soul of the monster whom the sight of misfortune could never soften, the vindictive nourishing in his bosom, the gnawing vipers, which are consuming him! Envy, if thou darest, the sleep of the murderer, the iniquitous judge, or the oppressor, whose couches are surrounded by the torches of the furies; but no! humanity obliges thee to partake of their merited torments. Comparing thyself with them, and finding thy bosom the constant abode of peace, thou wilt find a subject of self-congratulation. Finally,---Behold the decree of destiny fulfilled on all. She wills, that virtue shall never go unrewarded, but crime be ever its own punishment.

NOTES.

NOTE A. --- CHAP. I.

MEN have fallen into a thousand errors, by ascribing an existence to the objects of our interior perceptions, distinct from ourselves, in the same manner as we conceive them separately. It becomes of importance, therefore, to examine the nature of the distinctions which subsist among those objects.

Some of these are so distinct from others, that they cannot exist together. The surface of a body cannot at the same time be both white and black in all its parts: nor can

one body be more or less extended than another of the same dimensions. Two ideas thus distinguished necessarily exclude one another; since the existence of one of them necessarily infers the non-existence of the other, and, consequently, its own separate and independent existence. This class I call real or exclusive existences.

But there is another class, which, in opposition to the former, I call fictitious, or imaginary existences. While a body is passing from one colour or shape to another, we successively experience different sensations; yet it is evident, that we remain the same, it only being that body which changes colour or shape. But the body is neither its colour nor shape, since it could exist without them, and still be the same body. Neither is the shape or figure of a body, its colour, motion, extent, nor hardness; because those qualities are distinct from each other, and any one of them can exist separate from and independent of the rest. But as they can exist together, they are not distinguished like those which cannot exist

together at the same time. They cannot have a separate and distinct existence from bodies whose properties they are. The same power by which a white body exists, is that by which its whiteness also exists. What we call whiteness cannot exist of itself, separate from a body. This is the distinction between things capable of being separated, though found joined together; and which, though exciting in us different impressions, may yet be separately considered, and become so many distant objects of perception. This class of imaginary or fictitious objects, existing only in our own mind, must not be confounded with the first class of objects, which have a real, exclusive, and independent existence of their own.

Innumerable errors have arisen by confounding those distinctions. In mathematics, for example, we hear every moment of points and lines, or extensions without length, and surfaces having length and breadth without depth,---though geometers themselves confess, that such bodies nei-

ther do nor can exist, but in the mind, while every body in nature is truly extended in every sense. Unskilful materialists have fallen into gross absurdities, by mistaking, for real and distinct existences, the different properties of extension, separately considered by mathematicians. Hence they formed the world of atoms, or small bodies, without either bulk or extension, yet possessing infinite hardness, and a great variety of forms. Bodies such as those can only exist in the minds of atomists.

If even able men can be so clumsily deceived, by not distinguishing between the real existence of external bodies, and the fictitious existence of perceptions, existing only in the mind, it is not to be wondered at, that a multitude of errors should have arisen, in comparing, not only those perceptions themselves, but even their mutual relations with one another.

I do not say, that sensations can exist separate from ourselves. The sentiments of pleasure and pain, though not distinct from

him who feels them, certainly are so from my mind which perceives, reflects upon, and compares them with other sensations. As the sentiment of real existence is clearer than that of imaginary or fictitious, we imagine, that a similar distinction exists between all the objects which the mind conceives. Hence the operations of mind, and its different properties, have been considered, like real beings, as so many entities having a real existence of their own, and have thus acquired a physical existence, which they do not possess of themselves. Hence our mind has been distinguished from ourselves, as the part is from its whole. The mind itself has been separated from the soul, or that which animates, from that which makes us live. In the mind, a distinction has been made between the understanding and the will; in other words, between that which perceives and that which wills, that which wills and that which wills not. Our perceptions have been distinguished from ourselves, and from one another; hence thoughts, ideas, &c. which are nothing but the faculty of perception itself

viewed in relation to some of its functions. All these, however, are only modifications of our essence, and no more distinguished from themselves, nor from us, than extension, solidity, shape, colour, motion, or rest, from the same body. Yet absolute distinctions have been made between them, and they have been considered as so many small entities, of which we form the assemblage. According, therefore, to those philosophers, we are composed of thousands of little bodies, as distinct from one another as the different trees in a forest, each of which exists by a particular and independent power!

With regard to things really distinct from us, not only their properties, but even the relations of those properties, have been distinguished from themselves, and from one another; and to these a real existence has been given. It was observed, that bodies act upon, strike and repel one another, and, in consequence of their action and reaction, changes were produced in them. When, for example, I put my

hand to the fire, I feel what is called heat : in this case, fire is the cause, and heat the effect. To abridge language, general terms, applying to particular ideas of a similar nature, were invented. The body that produces the change in another, was called the cause,---and the body suffering the change, the effect. As those terms produce in the mind some idea of existence, action, re-action, and change, the habit of using them makes men believe, that they have a clear and distinct perception of them. By the continual use of these words, men have at length believed, that there can exist a cause, neither a substance nor a body ; a cause, though distinct from all matter, without either action or re-action, yet capable of producing every supposable effect.

NOTE B. --- CHAP. IV.

CHANGES are produced in bodies by their action and re-action upon one another. The same body, at present a cause, was previously an effect ; or, in other words, the body which produces a change in another, by acting upon it, has itself undergone a change by the action of another body. One body may, in relation to others, be at the same time both cause and effect. While I push forward a body with the stick in my hand, the motion of the stick, which is the effect of my impulse, is the cause of the progression of the body that is pushed. The word *cause*, only denotes the perception of the change which one body produces in another, considered in relation to the body that produces it ; and the word *effect*, signifies nothing more than the perception of the same change, considered relative to the body that suffers it. The absurdity of supposing the existence of independent and absolute causes, which neither are nor can

be effects, must appear obvious to every unbiassed understanding.

The infinite progression of bodies which have been in succession, cause and effect, soon fatigued men desirous of discovering a general cause for every particular effect. They all at once, therefore, ascended to a first cause, supposed to be universal, in relation to which every particular cause is an effect, though not itself the effect of any cause. The only idea they can give of it is, that it produced all things; not only the form of their existence, but even their existence itself. It is not, according to them, either a body, or a being like particular beings; in a word, it is the universal cause. And this is all they can say about it.

From what has been said, (*vide* NOTE A.) it must appear, that this universal cause, is but a chimera, a mere phantom, at most an imaginary or fictitious being, only existing in the minds of those who consider it. It is, however, the Destiny of the Greeks,—the God of philosophers, Jews, and Christians,

--the Benevolent Spirit of the new Parisian sect of Theophilanthropists; the only sect which has ever yet attempted to found a worship upon principles bearing any resemblance to morality, reason, or common sense.

Those who, without acknowledging this universal cause, content themselves with particular causes, have generally distinguished them from material substances. Seeing the same change, often produced by different actions or causes, they conceived the existence of particular causes, distinct from sensible bodies. Some have ascribed to them intelligence and will,---hence gods, dæmons, genii, good and bad spirits. Others, who cannot conceive the existence of a mode of action different from their own, have imagined certain virtues to proceed from the influence of the stars, chance, and a thousand other dark, unintelligible terms, which signify nothing more than blind and necessary causes.

NOTE C. --- CHAP. V.

AMONG the innumerable errors into which men are continually falling, by confounding fictitious with real objects, is that of supposing an infinite power, cause, wisdom, or intelligence to exist, from only considering the properties of wisdom, power, and intelligence, in the beings whom they see.--- The term *infinite* is totally incompatible with the existence of any thing finite, positive or real ; in other words, it carries with it the impossibility of real existence. Those who call a power, quantity, or number, infinite, speak of something undetermined, of which no just idea can be formed ; because, however extended the idea may be, it must fall far short of the thing represented. An infinite number, for example, can neither be conceived nor expressed. Admitting for a moment the existence of such a number, it may be asked, whether a certain part, the half for example, may not be taken from it ? This half is finite, and may be

counted and expressed ; but by doubling it, we make a sum equal to an infinite number, which will then be determined, and to which an unit may at least be added. This sum will then be greater than it was before, though infinite, or that to which nothing could be added, yet we can make an addition to it ! It is therefore at the same time, both infinite and finite, and consequently possesses properties exclusive of one another. We might, with equal propriety, conceive the existence of a white body which is not white, or in other words, a mere chimera ; all we can say of which is, that it neither does nor can exist.

What has been said of an infinite number, equally applies either to an infinite cause, intelligence, or power. As there are different degrees of causation, intelligence, and power, those degrees must be considered as units, the sum of which will express the quantity of the power and intelligence of such causes. --- An infinity of power, action or intelligence, to which nothing can be added, nor conceived, is impossible, never has existed, and never can exist.

NOTE D. --- CHAP. VIII.

MA N is born with a disposition to know, or to feel and receive impressions from the action of other bodies upon him. Those impressions are called sensations, perceptions, or ideas. These impressions leave a trace or vestige of themselves, which are sometimes excited in the absence of the objects which occasioned them. This is the faculty of memory, or the sentiment by which man has a knowledge of former impressions, accompanied by a perception of the distinction between the time he received, and that in which he remembers them.

Every impression produces an agreeable or disagreeable sensation. When lively, we call it pleasure or pain ; when feeble, satisfaction, ease, inconvenience or uneasiness. The first of these sentiments impels us towards objects, and makes us use efforts to

join and attach them to ourselves, to augment and prolong the force of the sensation, to renew and recal it when it ceases. We love objects which produce such sensations, and are happy in possessing them : We seek and desire their possession, and are miserable upon losing them. The sentiment of pain induces us to fly and shun objects which produce it, to fear, hate, and detest their presence.

We are so constituted, as to love pleasure and hate pain ; and this law, engraven by nature on the heart of every human being, is so powerful, that in every action of life it forces our obedience. Pleasure is attached to every action necessary to the preservation of life, and pain to those of an opposite nature. Love of pleasure, and hatred of pain, induce us, without either examination or reflection, to act so as to obtain possession of the former and the absence of the latter.

The impressions once received, it is not in man's power either to prolong or to render

them durable. There are certain limits which human efforts cannot exceed. Some impressions are more poignant than others, and render us either happy or miserable. An impression pleasant at its commencement, frequently produces pain in its progress. Pleasure and pain are so much blended together, that it is seldom that the one is felt without some part of the other.

Man, like every other animal, upon coming into the world, abandons himself to present impressions, without foreseeing their consequences or issue. Foresight can only be acquired by experience, and reflection upon the impressions communicated to us by objects. Some men, in this respect, continue infants all their lives, never acquiring the faculty of foresight ; and even among the most wise, few are to be found, upon whom, at some periods of life, certain violent impressions, those of love for example, the most violent of all, have not reduced into a state of childhood, foreseeing nothing, and permitting themselves to be guided by momentary impulses.

As we advance in years, we acquire more experience in comparing new and unknown objects, with the idea or image of those whose impression memory has preserved. We judge of the unknown from the known, and consequently know whether those ought to be sought for or avoided.

The faculty of comparing present with absent objects which exist only in the memory, constitutes reason. It is the balance with which we weigh things; and by recalling those that are absent, we can judge of the present, by their relations to one another. This is the boasted reason which man, upon I know not what pretext, arrogates to himself to the exclusion of all other animals. We see all animals possessing evident marks of judgment and comparison. Fishes resort to the same spot at the precise hour in which they have been accustomed to receive food---The weaker animals form themselves into societies for mutual defence. The sagacity of the dog is generally known, and the foresight of the bee has long been proverbial. The bears of Siberia, and the

elephants of India, seem to possess a decided superiority in understanding over the human savages and slaves, who inhabit those countries.

Some philosophers suppose the existence of the sense of touch in man, in a superior degree than in other animals, sufficient to account for his superiority over them. If to that we add, the advantage of a greater longevity, and a capacity of supporting existence all over the globe, an advantage peculiar to the human species, perhaps we have enumerated all the causes of the superiority which man ever received from nature, whatever may be his pretensions. Speech, or the power of communicating ideas, is common to almost all animals. Some of them even possess it in a higher degree than man in certain states of society. Dampierre describes a nation, whose speech consisted in the howling of a few guttural sounds, and whose vocabulary did not contain more than thirty words.

NOTE E. --- CHAP. XXI.

WHATEVER may be their pretensions, the partisans of religion can only prove, that every thing is the effect of a cause ; that we are often ignorant of the immediate causes of the effects we see, that even when we discover them, we find that they are the effects of other causes, and so on *ad infinitum*. But they neither have proved, nor can they prove, the necessity of ascending to a first eternal cause, the universal cause of all particular ones, producing not only the properties, but even the existence of things, and which is independent of every other cause. It is true, we do not always know the tie, chain, and progress, of every cause ; but what can be inferred from that ? Ignorance can never be a reasonable motive either of belief or of determination.

I am ignorant of the cause that produces a certain effect, and cannot assign one to my own satisfaction. But must I be con-

tented with that assigned by another more presumptuous, though not better informed, than I, who says he is convinced; especially when I know the existence of such a cause to be impossible? The watch of a shipwrecked European having fallen into the hands of an Indian tribe, they held a consultation to discover the cause of its extraordinary movements. For a long time they could resolve upon nothing. At length one of the group, bolder than the rest, declared it to be an animal of a species different from any with which they were acquainted; and as none of them could convince him, that those movements of the watch could proceed from any other principle than that which produces animal life and action, he thought himself entitled to oblige the assembly to accept of his explanation.

CONCLUSION.

THE SYSTEM OF NATURE, of which the preceding work is a compend, was first published in Paris, about thirty years ago. The impious works of Voltaire, Rousseau, and D'Alembert, had prepared the minds of the French nation for its reception. Already were the materials collected for that fire, which has in our times burst forth with such fury as to threaten the destruction of every thing great, noble, and good in polished society. It is not, therefore, surprising that a work of that nature, so favourable to the views of the conspirators, and circulated with all their industry and influence, should have met with a favourable reception, or produced a considerable impression on the minds

of men, already disposed to principles which we have had the misfortune to see carried into effect, by the disciples of the Voltairean school of infidelity, the Dantons and the Robespierres of the present day. Its principles, with the rapidity of lightning, spread their baleful influence over the Court, the Parliaments of justice, and the entire republic of letters; in a word, over all classes of Frenchmen. Even the ministers of religion did not escape the contagion. The Gallican church counted among her enemies, even those dignified ministers who shared the most largely in her favours. Such force did the monster Infidelity assume, that the countenance and protection of one of the best Princes who ever filled the French throne, hardly screened religion from its brutal insults. That such a work could produce so great an effect upon a learned, pious, and gallant nation, is

one of those facts which will appear incredible to posterity. The philosophers alone of that period will find, in human nature only, its possible verification.

Fortunately, the progress of scepticism has hitherto, in this country, been very limited. The good sense and piety of Britons, impregnable to the arguments of a Hobbes, a Shaftesbury, a Tindal, a Bolingbroke, and even of a Hume, found no difficulty in repelling the puny attacks of French infidelity. The pious example of the wisest of sovereigns, was well imitated by his faithful subjects of every class. The altar of religion, guarded by its holy ministers, and supported by the throne, successfully stemmed the torrent of infidelity, then deluging the greatest part of the continent of Europe; and still

repels it from the shores of this happy island.

The translator deems it unnecessary to trouble the readers, who have waded with him through this Augean stable of blasphemy and impiety, with many remarks. The inconsistency and irrelevancy of the arguments contained in this work, must appear evident to every candid enquirer. Lest, however, a taint of scepticism should remain on the minds of some readers, he will be pardoned for recommending to them a few publications, any one of which, he is certain, would convince the most confirmed atheist, were he to study it with the attention and candour so necessary to the investigation of truth, but which it is seldom the lot of men of such principles to possess.

BERKLEY bishop of Cloyne, in his various metaphysical works, by admitting the first principles assumed by infidelity, and pushing them to their necessary conclusions, clearly exposes their absurdity and extravagance. To those who are partial, and accustomed to abstract disquisition, his work will prove particularly acceptable.

The numerous answers to Hume, by some English divines, and certain Scottish philosophers, the fathers of the Common-sense school, may be perused with much advantage. — Among these, the writings of the concise Reid, the modest and profound Beattie, the temperate Hurd, and the mild Horne, hold a distinguished place. The great variety of arguments so forcibly urged by Campbell upon the subject of miracles, by destroying one of the strongest fortresses of scepticism, has contributed

much to the support of religion. The very clear, perspicuous, and intelligible treatise of the present Dr Gregory upon liberty and necessity, has entirely removed every shadow of doubt from the minds of the well-informed, upon that abstract and much contested subject. The very easy terms upon which his publication may be had, is another inducement to its perusal.

To enumerate all the able writers who have distinguished themselves in defence of the authenticity of the Scriptures, would occupy volumes. Their number is so great, and their merit so eminent, that it would be difficult to select any one as meriting particular praise. The Translator cannot, however, avoid recommending the very ingenious, acute, and profoundly logical treatise of Mr Soame Jenyns, upon the internal e-

vidence of Christianity, to its advocates, as containing an inexhaustible magazine of arguments for proving the authenticity and genuineness of their faith. To the indolent, or those unhabituated to abstract speculations, the spirited answer of the judicious Dr Finlay of Glasgow to the writings of Voltaire and his pupils, may be very useful, on account of the sprightly vein of wit and humour pervading it, which excite and preserve even the most languid attention throughout the vast intricate labyrinth of scepticism which the Doctor is forced to explore, so as to make his victory complete, by hunting error from her most hidden recesses.

The various performances of the present Bishops of Rochester and Landaff, particularly those of the former, merit the highest praise, on account of their elegant simplicity of

ERRATA.

PAGE. LINE.

- 53 15 *For* denied, *read* decried
 64 1 — instructed, — intoxicated
 — 16 — collations, — collections
 93 6 — destructiveto— destructive of
 — 11 — prevented — perverted
 99 penult.— sportive — spiritual
 101 12 *After* “atheists,” *insert*, “are meant”

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FINIS.

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